

St. Mark's Vestry Meeting
March 18, 2024

Present:

Rev. Aileen DiBenedetto, Rector
James Normington, Senior Warden
Stuart Paul, Junior Warden
Frank Ruggiero, Treasurer
Rebecca Carpenito
Brenda Cole-Milner
Cathy Chipolone-Collins
Gary Courtemanche
Brenda Matthews
John Mentzer
Laurie Voedisch

Absent:

Rebecca Ethier, Clerk
Stephanie Powers

Opening Prayer – Rev. Aileen offered an opening prayer.

Learning – Rev. Aileen talked about Holy Week, our most sacred time of the year. This is our story of salvation. We will come together more than once during Holy Week, and it starts around ritual--- reminds of traditions and certain ways of doing things. Eucharist is a common act of sharing a meal. Ritual is taking everyday action and bringing meaning to it. It is still ordered and traditional. When we engage in ritual, we engage in the story and become a part of it. We learn the story with our selves but hear with our entire being. We become one community and share in the body of Christ when we receive the Eucharist. We practice forgiving each other so we can go out in the world and do that. We need the ritual more than the one hour when we practice this. Our Holy Week helps us walk through the whole story of salvation.

Jesus' triumphal entry is at one gate and at the other gate the Roman Governor is entering. We see this wonderful joyous day that happened 2000 years ago, we wave palms, sing Hosanas, and then we tell the part of the Gospel calling for his crucifixion. We move very quickly from celebration to death. We experience this in our own lives; Jesus doesn't leave us alone in our own lives. When we walk into Holy Monday, there isn't much attention to this by liturgists. Tuesday, Jesus foretold his death. Wednesday, Judas planned to betray. On Thursday, this is the beginning of the tritium or the great three days. These three days are so special and so important that we have one liturgy that is split into three days. There is no greeting on Thursday, there is no dismissal on Thursday and Friday, there will be no greeting until Sunday. One of the rituals on Maundy Thursday is washing of feet. Maundy Thursday is the great last supper and the great Thanksgiving, the Eucharist. Then comes the agony in the garden on Thursday, and we have the ritual of our overnight vigil. On Good Friday, this is the day Jesus gives himself in love. We come together in prayer and recognize our sin, pray to God, recognize our pain, and the pain in this world. Our ritual on this day is to fast from Eucharist. On Friday, we do the stations of the cross. When we come to the Easter vigil, our liturgy as we celebrate on Sunday falls in the same pattern. We start at creation and end at resurrection. We light the pascal candle, renew baptismal vows, and enter the first Eucharist of Easter. Every Sunday is a celebration of Easter, and we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus.

Review of Minutes – The minutes of the February Vestry meeting were reviewed. Terry Downing made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted; seconded by Laurie Voedisch; none opposed.

Rector's Report – Rev. Aileen expressed gratitude to Rebecca Ethier for her leadership in planning the pancake breakfast, as well as everyone who helped cook, set up, clean up, oversaw the raffle, and donated items. Other expressions of gratitude were offered for:

- Rectory Paint Party – Brenda Milner, Gary Courtemanche, Stuart Paul, Cathy Collins, and Frank Ruggiero
- Stuart Paul for taking care of St. Mark's House
- Gary Courtemanche for cleaning the bathrooms in the youth center
- Michael for cleaning the kitchen (Terry Downing made a motion to purchase a \$50 gift card to a local restaurant to show Vestry's appreciation to Michael for the exceptional job he did cleaning the kitchen; seconded by James Normington; all in favor.)
- Thank you for the small choir that has come together, including John Hansen, Brenda Matthews, Stephanie Powers, and Diana Anctil.

There will be a Wardens prayer and brunch in April.

Recent changes on the website include:

- The worship page now has a link to the recorded worship for each week and the full script bulletin for the 10 a.m. service We will be adding in the full music as well.
- A Way of Loveway page has been added; this is the formation program that has been offered during Lent.

Rev. Aileen will be away from April 16-22 to attend an Episcopal retreat for priests. It will be held close to Yosemite National Park.

St. Mark's will be sharing the tritium with our local churches. It was suggested that food be offered for those gathering for the Easter vigil.

Bishop Fisher will visit St. Mark's on June 2nd.

Church school will continue in the Rectory for now.

Rev. Aileen has been working with our North Worcester County church partners to plan Evensongs on Ascension Day, at Thanksgiving, and one more in the fall.

Treasurer's Report - Frank Ruggiero reviewed the contract for waste removal. They will reduce the \$50 increase to \$10 when we sign the contract. The first year price is guaranteed unless there are additional costs due to tipping and fuel costs. Any other rises in costs can be declined with written notice with a specified time frame. This agreement would be for five-years. To terminate early, we would need to pay for 6 months. The Finance Committee has reviewed the contract; Terry Downing said that it seemed like a pretty common agreement. Brenda Cole-Milner noted that after the first year, any price increase would likely be negotiable. Diana Anctil (Finance Committee) reviewed the agreement and had expressed that in her experience with Don's Diner, this seemed to be a reasonable rate. Prices have not increased excessively over the past several years. Frank Ruggiero made a motion to permit him to sign the contract on behalf of the church; seconded by Stuart Paul; all in favor.

Frank noted that we are on track to hit our deficit. We haven't made any headway with coming in lower with our deficit. Pledges are lower than last few years, and we are also not currently receiving the full amounts pledged. The salaries appear that they are under budgeted; Frank clarified that the musician salary is not included, but it is in the line for replacements. It will still be different because diocese pays every two weeks instead of monthly now. Otherwise, the expenses and income are just a little lower than projected. Snow removal may stay at \$2000 for the year, which is pretty good. On the balance sheet, the checking account is getting low. The moves of money voted on at the February meeting have not happened yet. At the April vestry meeting, we will need to decide which trust fund we will cash out to start paying our bills. Frank reported he would not be present at the April meeting so we will need to figure out how to get this done in time. The balance of the de-leading and window replacements at the Rectory will come to about \$15,000. Frank suggested that it would make sense to take money out of the Rectory Fund for this and just cash out the account since we are not using this property as a Rectory now. If we want to leave the fund open, then we will need to leave a minimum amount there.

Senior Warden's Report - James Normington provided an update on recent grant requests:

- He will be resubmitting a grant request to LCU in the fall for the Community Cafe' for kitchen equipment and supplies; it will be resubmitted as MDI grant.
- A MDI grant request will also be submitted for an AED defibrillator for the church.
- A grant request to fund a petting zoo/donkey for Palm Sunday as well as the Johnny Appleseed Festival or the Halloween Parade has been submitted.

James reported the tower contractor will be raking out and hydroseeding the front lawn. This has already been funded. The foreman came out in September and priced it out and it was to be done just before the floods, but had to be rescheduled for springtime. Terry Downing suggested creating a tracking sheet for grant requests and the amounts requested and received.

James will be doing morning prayer when Rev. Aileen is away at the retreat in April.

Buildings & Grounds – Stuart Paul reported that the furnace is still out in St. Mark's house, but a plumber is working on it.

Sink in the youth center is plugged up again.

The pizza and paint party went well at the Rectory.

Grumpy Old Men - Gary Courtemanche reported that 18-20 people have signed up, including 13 men and 7 women. Bud Hallet will be the coach; he knows our church buildings so well. This will be funded with a plate offering. Other parishioners can participate by helping to fund projects. Frank will use a closed-out account for the funds for this group. The people who participate will decide together what projects are going to be tackled. The first project will be cleaning out the basement. Dry vacuums and a power washer will be needed. We don't want to damage the siding. Gary said that he anticipates good food and fellowship. The first gathering of the group will be April 1st at 9:00

Parish Audit - Concern was expressed about cost of doing the audit. It was noted that someone is willing to pay for the audit this year. The Diocese recommendation is to have an outside audit every 3 to 5 years. The cost is approximately \$350. It could be possible to get money back on annual assessment by refiling annual parish report. The person who would complete the audit works for the diocese and

sits on the Diocese Council which advises the Bishop. He has been an episcopal bookkeeper for 30 years. Laurie Voedisch questioned whether there was any reason not to do it from the perspective of the finance committee? Terry noted that we have been lucky to have a group of people who have been willing to do the audit the past few years, but there is no cost to the church to have an outside audit this year, and the Finance Committee would be interested in seeing the results. Laurie made motion to proceed with an outside audit for 2024; seconded by Brenda Matthews; none opposed; 2 abstentions.

Vestry Meetings - A discussion was had regarding having Vestry meetings open to the members of the parish. It was noted that the Vestry minutes are shared on the church website. If someone wants to present something to the Vestry, we have always invited that person to come and put them first on the agenda as a guest. Anyone who does show up is welcome. Laurie Voedisch suggested that during announcements on Sunday morning, a Vestry member or Rev. Aileen remind the congregation that Vestry is always available to talk with members about any concerns or the issues that Vestry has been discussed.

Adopt a Bill – The suggestion for members to choose a bill to adopt was discussed. Cathy Collins suggested trying this for six months with smaller bills. Terry Downing suggested letting the finance committee put together something for Vestry to review at the April meeting. He noted it may take longer, but if so, it will be presented at a later date.

Church Pasta Dinner - John Mentzer said he would like to schedule planning meetings to assign tasks for the church pasta dinner. The meetings will be held on March 21st and April 19th at 7:00 p.m. the Pasta Dinner is scheduled for Saturday, April 27th. John will get the word out regarding meetings.

Accessibility – Brenda Cole-Milner reported that we have been having a really hard time getting someone to fix the elevator. She called the inspector that came to inspect the elevator, but he has not returned any calls. She asked whether we could make the entrance on West St. accessible. It was noted that we tried this in the fall, but it did not go well. She asked whether a ramp might work better. Stu Paul stated that we would need to have a ten foot run for every inch that the ramp inclines. The deck would have to be raised and the walkway redone. In addition, the cupola would need to be adjusted. We would also have to identify accessible parking in close proximity to the ramp. Rev. Aileen noted that our goal is to be accessible and upstairs. For now, the Executive Committee has recommended having one worship service downstairs and one upstairs each week.

Laurie Voedisch offered to send a letter to the appointing authority for the inspector's office to see if we can generate a response.

Meeting Adjourned – The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Next Meeting – The next Vestry Meeting is scheduled for 7:00 p.m. on Monday, April 15, 2024.